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Obey Tells Defense Secretary: “We Have to Have Less Confrontation and More Cooperation”

WASHINGTON, D.C. “ Today, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates testified before the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. As the subcommittee met, the Senate passed the Emergency Supplemental funding bill 51 to 47.

At the hearing, Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, made the following statement:

“œI have been here a long time, you have, Mr. Murtha has, Mr. Young has, a lot of us have. I was here during Viet Nam, I was here during El Salvador, I was here during the Contra war.

“In the end, in El Salvador, and in the end with respect to the Contra War, the controversy ended with a compromise. I remember, for instance, after the Congress took final action on providing funds to stand down the Contras. After the election Secretary Baker came down representing a new President, President Bush. We sat in Jim Wright’s office and agreed to a side bar compromise sealed with a handshake that enabled the administration to put additional pressure on the Sandinistas to hold elections, which they lost.

“The only way that that compromise was reached was that people who disagreed strongly sat down and, in the end, worked out a compromise. They each swallowed something and they wound up reaching a solution that worked.”

“I think it is very important for the administration to understand, and I hope you will use your considerable influence to remind people on the other end of the avenue, that there are three branches of government. The President has his obligations, we certainly respect those, but we have our obligations too.

“The supplemental appropriation that was passed by the House last week should not be taken lightly. It is a very serious effort by members of the House to try and send a clear message to the White House that we must understand that Iraq will not be resolved in any pleasant way unless there is a political settlement. And that political settlement is beyond the ability of our soldiers to reach, though our soldiers can try to help contribute to conditions that lead to a settlement.

“I think that we have to have less confrontation and more cooperation.” I would submit that that is a two way street, and it ought to start with the White House, and if it doesn’t start with the White House it certainly ought to end with the White House at some point.”

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